

# ***Rehearsal Etiquette***

1. **Be on time.** Remember: **to be early is to be on time, to be on time is to be late, and to be late is to be fired.** Showing up late for rehearsal holds everyone up. You may miss some vital information that is addressed at the beginning and will waste time having to be informed of it later. Every now and then disaster strikes we can't help but be late. However, those instances should only happen occasionally. Make a habit out of being late and you show disrespect for the production, your colleagues, and yourself. Doesn't your work deserve all the time you can get at rehearsal? Of course it does! Show up on time. And if you are running late, let your stage manager know.
2. **Warm up.** Always a good idea. Everyone has their own idea of what a warm up is and what they require. This can change given the show you're in, and that is nothing but appropriate. **Do what *you* need to do in order to get your head and body in the right place to truly deliver.** If anything, you'll feel better simply knowing you put the work in.
3. **Respect the process of others.** What you do to prepare your character may not be what someone else does. Does that make either of you right or wrong? No. As such, refrain from making detracting comments about your fellow performer's process, like how they would be better off if they were doing some other kind of actor work instead of whatever trash they've decided to occupy their time with. **You don't know what works for them, and have no right to prescribe.** If you see someone struggling—and especially if it's affecting your performance—you can always **offer help** by suggesting to meet and talk about your characters' relationship. Verbalizing certain things may help clarify action for both of you. But be mindful: do not **direct** your cast mates. Unless you are actor-manager on the production, that is not your job and will only breed animosity and ill will towards you for stepping out of your role. It may also undermine the director's voice in rehearsal, and throw the show out of whack: suddenly your colleague's performance is what *you'd* make of it, and that may not be a thing that fits with the director's vision of the show as a whole.
4. **Take the note.** We've all been in a notes session where an actor gets into an argument or debate with the director about a note they are given. On top of responding in a way that may be construed as haughty (by insisting the director is wrong and telling them so in front of the entire cast) it wastes a lot of other people's time that are in no way affected by the note that's been given and probably don't give a damn. **If you do receive a note that you do not agree with, acknowledge the note, and ask the director if you can speak to them**

**about it afterwards.** They will most likely say yes, you won't waste anyone's time (including your own) and the space will be clear of conflict. Lovely. Also, don't lay down during or sleep through a notes session. It sets an ill precedent.

5. **Don't apologize, just do.** When receiving a note, either after rehearsal or when in a scene, don't stop to apologize profusely for having done something wrong, and explain to everyone in a brief thesis why you did that. Nobody cares. Just—again—take the note, incorporate the change as best you can, and reset to try that moment once more. Stopping rehearsal to apologize kills the momentum in so many ways—you've broken character, you show embarrassment sometimes to an extent that your castmates may feel embarrassed too, and (once more) it wastes time. **Some days are long, and everyone will get to go home faster if you quietly fix something instead of drawing out the time telling us all how very sorry you are.** To an extent, you also fluster yourself more if you get worked up in this way, which will make it harder to actually achieve what is being asked of you. If you feel the need to apologize, a brief "Sorry" will suffice. If you feel you owe a colleague more than that, seek them out after rehearsal.
6. **Make choices.** Someday the sun will explode, rendering all of our lives insignificant. In the meantime, enjoy yourself and try some things out. The hours spent in the rehearsal room should be used for exploration, and then later, refinement. If you don't bring something in initially to work with, your character may never be as fleshed out as possible. This doesn't mean you must bring your whole character in on the first day, but **bring something and commit to exploring it.** Set an intention at the beginning of each rehearsal: "Today I will focus on my character's need for \_\_\_\_\_," and whatnot. Give yourself permission and room to grow over the process. If you take anything too far, your director will let you know. Cast aside doubt and play—and play BIG. So long as you don't endanger yourself or others, it's all good.
7. **Respect people and the space.** This one should be simple: when other people are on their feet working, be quiet. If you must speak, speak softly. And when you leave the room, restore it to the way you found it. This includes throwing out your trash.
8. **Stay positive.** The rehearsal room is a sacred space where people are very vulnerable. Don't underestimate the impact of a groan at a piece of direction, declaiming the author of the piece,

or criticizing a colleague's work *sotto voce*. These shows of negativity tend to linger, and may cause people to act self-consciously and stifle their creativity for fear of looking stupid.

**Actors are sensitive enough and generally don't need any help feeling horrible about their work—they can do that well enough on their own.** It's such a help when people are kind and considerate in the space. If you do loathe a colleague or their work, discuss this with sympathetic friends at the bar afterwards, not during their scene or at a break. And remember: stay positive not only about others' work, but your own, too.

9. **Be economical in your life outside of rehearsal.** This has been a major influence on my success in rehearsal during my current festival. When the days are long, there is an obvious temptation to let the nights be equally long—you work hard, and you want to play hard because of it. But when you get released at 10:30PM and need to be back in the space at 8AM, **staying up all hours of the night into morning make your job harder.** You don't listen as well to people on stage or off when you're half awake.
10. **Listen to your stage manager.** Your SM is there to help you. They are the keepers of time, givers of line notes, and track every prop you need. They are also in the space well before you and will leave well after you. There's a reason actors and stage managers share a union. **Respect them as an equal, contributing to the piece just as much even if in a different function.**